

[Life After Forty]

ORIGINAL MSS. OR FIELD NOTES (Check one)

PUB. Living Lore in

New England Irish

TITLE Shoe Laster of Lynn - #4

WRITER Jane K. Leary

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SOURCES GIVEN (?) Interview - James Hughes

COMMENTS

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Section #4

Page 1.

Name: Jane K. Leary, 32 Acorn St.

Subject: The Shoe Laster of Lynn

Informant: James Hughes, 51 Johnson St. Life After Forty.

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"After you're fiarty (forty) or fiarty fieve (five) years old the tame goes awfully fast. Ya kin hardly know the tame is passin' till it's gone.

"Why it sames ([?]) only yesterday thet I took a trip arou' the canal ta California ta see ma (my) two sisters thet wuz alivin' thiery. Thiey're dead now. It wuz tin years ago thet I wint.

I had intintions a stayin' whin I wint. I wuz a gonna get a job . thier in a shoe shop an' stiaiy.

"Thiere wuz three shops I tried ta get wirk in, but they all had machines in 'em, an' I wanted hand lastin'. One I did wirk in fir a tame out in the desert from Long Bache (beach) but it looked as lonely out thiery that I dacided ta give it up an' come back ta Lynn. I knowed I could get a job here agin. "Shops" or "Ships"?

In most a the ships shops thiery they aven had the assemblin' machine as well as the bed machine an' the niggerhead, so there wuz no wirk atall fir a hand laster." See page 3 2
Technical info.

Usually the first and most essential lasting machine to be installed in a shoe factory is the niggerhead for that can be used to tack both the sole part and heel end of the upper to the innersole. In the more modern shops there are three other machines in use today. They are: the assemblin machine, used to assemble the upper, the innersole, and the counter which is a stiff piece of leather put inside the shoe at the heel to make that section of the shoe stiff. This machine puts these three pieces in place and puts temporary tacks at the heel / end and the sole part of the shoe. The bed machine "wipes in" or tacks the upper to the sole section of the innersole; the niggerhead nails the heel end of the upper to the innersole. The fourth machine steams the shoe so as to make the upper fit more snugly around the last.

In some few small shops in Lynn today, only a part of the lasting operation is done by machine— the part done by the niggerhead. In that instance, this machine does the nailing

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all around the shoe, whereas, as stated above, in a larger shop where they also have a bed machine, the niggerhead is used only to nail the heel end.

In the small shops, there is still work for the hand laster. He assembles the shoe— puts in the counter, and the stiff lining in the toe of the shoe, and then 3 then tacks three temporary tacks in the heel end of the shoe and three under the toe, too. It is that section of listing that Mr. Hughes and the 150 hand lasters still remaining in Lynn has done in the past fifteen or twenty years. For practionally practically every shop in Lynn today has at least a niggerhead. [Technical?]

“I wuz out thier a couple months jest the same bafore I give up that job an' come home. I wuz thier at St. Patrick's Diay, an' I should siay thiey celebrate it thiere, the aristocrats an' everybody, whether thiey're Irish or not.

“It wuz in Pasadena whiere ma sisters lived. Thet's same swell place, all kands a flowers, but some a the people are awful nosey. Some a 'em come from Arizona an' Texas, I guess.

“Ma sisters are dead now. The one din't have no children but the second one had two girls an' a bioy.

“All kands a jobs wuz scarce in California, not only the shoe jobs. Spacially wuz it hard fir a girl ta get an office job. ‘Count all the girls that come out ta be movie stars an' thin takin' inytheng thiey could jest ta make a living.

“It was hard fir ma nace (niece). It took her a long tame, but finally she got a job as police woman an' interpreter fir the greasers in the courts. Thet's what 4 thim Mexicans thet wirk on the railroads out thiere aire (are) called.

“Thim Spanish— the Mexicans aire Spanish ya know, aire awful atrick with thier young girls. Why they wun't let thim out alone, aven in the diaytame. Thiey're awful about thet.

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"An' the Spanish are jest the same in Havana too. Some one always goes with a young girl whin she goes out. An' womin niver go out without an escort. Thet's the custon thihere same as 'tis in Spain an' Portugal, aven in France. The girls in this country niver heard a the laike a thet but sometames I thenk it's a good idea at thet. Here they get too much fradom (freedom). out (?)"

"In Panama, thieres not much goin' on in the diaytame. It's maights thet the people go about. One thenk I remimber wuz a little piark (park) where they hed a band concert. It wuz nice

"Thiere wuz U. S. soldiers in Panama, ta taik care a the canal, ya know about 25,000 of 'em.

"The nicest scenery I iver seen wuz in California. I got thihere in the middle a January. Ma (my) two sisters an' thier families wuz down ta Long Bache (beach) on a picnic. It wuz nice with the people all havin' dinner on thim little tables built riaght arou' a bag (big) tree.

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"But I din't like the water thihere. It wuz very hard. All alkaline. Ya could see it in the teakettle, the white stuff as tickin' ta the teakettle.

"Another tame I wint outa town to look fir wirk. I wint ta Long Island City. I wirked thihere in a shop doin' hand lastin' an' I liked the wirk all raight, but it cost too much ta live. An' I hedda live in a little room that only had one window, an' meybe, a skaylight[?] (skylight). Ya miaght seen one of thim. One buildin' wuz almost raight up ta the other'n, and ya niver got no sun. It was awful. An' I hedda pay \$5 fir it. The cost a the eats wuzn't sa biad (bad) but the room I cun't stand it, so I come ta Lynn.

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“The shops wuz equipted nice all raight, but there wuzn't the sociability laike there wuz in the Lynn shops. Most a the wirkers wuz guinies. I din't feel at home atall so I give up the job an' come back ta Lynn.

“Besides the two sisters in California, I hed a third sister, an' after she married, she wint ta Hoboken, N. J. ta live. I lost track a her, but one tame I met a woman thet said whe she lived in a certain place. I sint a letter thiery but I niver got a answer. I guess she hed moved agin. I thenk she's got quite a large family. But Hoboken's an easy place ta get lost in, ya know, an' I guess the letter got lost. 6 “My other two sisters daied sence I wuz in California. [see?] p.3 7 Use with Section 1. [material?] - Boyhood. [More About Ireland](#)

The history a Ireland is an anterestint' theng. More'n 2000 years ago there wuz faightin' among the tribes. Thet wuz before the Chraistian (Christian) era. A fella by the name a Parthalon landed in Galway—that's the fishin' pairt a Ireland ya know. He come from Macedonia.

“Thiey lived thiery over 200 years. There come a plague thin an' cleaned 'em out. Some claimed there was people in Ireland aven before that though, some paople thet got a livin' from fishin',.

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Use with Section 1 material - Boyhood. [Memory Bits](#) I usta go barefoot in the bog in the summer tame. I loved it, it wuz sa nice in the cool bog on a hot diay. # We usta thresh oats — some called it corn — with a flale flail in the diays whin I wuz a bioy on the firm in Ireland. i

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“My uncle sang a nice tenor an' he laiked (liked) ta seng (sing) I remimber him asingin' specially “Low Black Car” an' “The Feather man from Claire.” I don't remimber all the words, ant I can't song maself, but I kin still hear him a singin' thim yet.”

See Section #6.